

Extract from
Interrogation of Hideki Tojo
25 March 1946
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Q When was the Prisoner of War Bureau set up?

A This was organized immediately after the outbreak of war.

Q Which war?

A The Greater East Asia War.

Q Why was it necessary to organize such a bureau?

A This is according to international law.

Q Why had not such a bureau existed during the China War or Incident?

A It was not necessary during the China Incident.

Q Was there any bureau at all set up in connection with the China Incident on the treatment of prisoners?

A There was no organization set up to deal with Chinese prisoners.

Q Who ordered this new bureau to be set up?

A The order for the formation of this bureau was issued by the War Minister.

Q This was during the time that you were War Minister and Premier?

A Yes.

Q Were you, from 7 December 1941 on, familiar with the provisions of the Hague and Geneva Conventions with respect to the treatment of prisoners of war?

A I knew of these at the time.

Q At that time did you, as Premier and War Minister, believe that the provisions of those conventions applied to Japan and should be followed by her in war?

A Naturally.

Q In addition to the provisions of those conventions, there are also other recognized rules and customs of war followed by civilized nations, are there not?

A As a civilized nation, we would follow the principles of humanism.

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Q I suppose by humanism, you mean that prisoners would be treated humanely, as by civilized nations?

A Yes.

Q So that, in general, from 7 December 1941 on, you, as Premier and War Minister, felt that Japan was bound by the Hague and Geneva Conventions with respect to the treatment of prisoners of war and also bound by the rules and customs of civilized nations with respect to treating prisoners of war humanely, did you not?

A Yes.

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- Q When did you first learn of the complaints concerning or facts indicating that there had been mistreatment of American and British prisoners of war?
- A The only complaints that ever came to my notice were in connection with food and so forth. Atrocities were not brought to my notice at all. I am astounded at the truth regarding atrocities that is now being revealed in the newspapers. If the Japanese had followed the Emperor's instructions, these atrocities would never have happened.
- Q But you, as Minister of War during the period when those atrocities were committed, are the responsible party for their commission, are you not?
- A Yes.
- Q What explanation can you give for the fact that you did not learn of them when they were so wide-spread and of such a serious nature?
- A I was always under the impression that army commanders in the field who were responsible for the treatment of prisoners understood what was required of them in this connection.
- Q During this entire period from 7 December 1941 on, you were aware of the fact, were you not, that the United States and Great Britain, through friendly nations, had warned the Japanese Government that Japanese officials and the Japanese Government would be held responsible for violations of the Hague and Geneva Conventions and for violations of the rules of war with respect to the treatment of prisoners of war?
- A Yes, and if these atrocities are true, treaties have been violated.
- Q During this same period, were you not aware that the United States and Great Britain, through friendly nations, had made numerous and repeated complaints, giving specific data and charging that there had been, in each instance, violations of the Hague and Geneva Conventions and of the rules of war in connection with the mistreatment of prisoners of war?

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- A I do not remember details, but I think these came through the Prisoner of War Information Bureau.
- Q Such complaints would first come to the Foreign Ministry and then be routed to the Minister of War's office, would they not?
- A Yes.
- Q How many of these complaints were made, that you recall, of your personal knowledge?
- A I cannot recall just now how many were received.
- Q What, if anything, did you do with respect to those which were received?
- A These were passed on to the various army commanders through the Prisoner of War Information Bureau.
- Q Were reports then made back by those bureau heads or individuals to you, as Minister of War, relative to these complaints?
- A No, no replies or reports were sent back. These complaints were sent to the various people concerned calling the matter to their attention.

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- Q Did you or anyone for you go to the scene where the mistreatment of the prisoners was alleged to have taken place to make an investigation of any of these complaints?
- A Yes, there are many instances. There was a case of mistreatment of prisoners of war during the building of the Burma-Thai Railway and I ordered a court martial in this connection.
- Q Was there any other personal investigation made of complaints made by the United States and Great Britain after 7 December 1941 with respect to the mistreatment by the Japanese Government of their captured American and British prisoners other than the one that you have just mentioned?
- A I myself heard rumors of mistreatment of prisoners of war at Bataan and when I was in the Philippines, I inquired of the Chief of Staff who informed me that the "march" was due to the lack of transportation and there were no cases of atrocities.
- Q Who was the Chief of Staff at that time?
- A Lieutenant General WACHI.
- Q What was the approximate time that you were in the Philippines and made this inquiry of the Chief of Staff?
- A This was 5 May 1943.
- Q What was the approximate date that the "Bataan March" took place?
- A I do not remember the date, but it was in the early part of 1942.
- Q How long after the "March" was it that you heard of the mistreatment of American troops?
- A These rumors came to my notice late in 1942 or early in 1943.

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Q Through what sources did you hear these rumors of the mistreatment of American troops at Bataan?

A It would be difficult to say from whom I heard these rumors.

Q Where did you hear these rumors?

A I heard these in Tokyo.

Q Regardless of what the sources of these rumors were, from how many sources did you hear them - how many occasions did you hear them?

A It would be difficult to say how many times I have heard these rumors.

Q What was the nature of the rumors that you heard in this connection?

A The rumors were to the effect that prisoners from Corregidor and Bataan had been mistreated.

Q In what respect had they been mistreated, according to the rumors?

A They had been made to walk long distances in the heat. Deaths due to mistreatment were usually referred to as death by sickness.

Q Did not the rumors also state and indicate that many of the troops who were forced to march in the heat were in no physical condition to march at all and should not have been forced to march because of their physical condition?

A No. The rumors mentioned nothing of this.

Q According to the rumors, what was the cause of the death of the American prisoners in this connection?

A All deaths were ascribed to sickness.

Q What kind of sickness caused the death of the men on that march?

A These details did not come to my notice.

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Q But it did come to your notice from the rumors that deaths occurred as a result of the march, did it not?

A Yes.

Q How many deaths had occurred, according to the rumors?

A This was not mentioned in the rumors.

Q Did not the rumors indicate that the deaths were caused by the physical condition of the troops who had been requested or forced to march?

A The rumors only stated that the prisoners were marched along distances in the heat.

Q How long before you discussed this matter while you were in the Philippines with the Chief of Staff was it that you had heard these rumors?

A Perhaps two or three months before this date, but I do not recall.

Q How much time did you spend discussing this march and this matter with the Chief of Staff while you were in the Philippines?

A This was not the main subject of my meeting with the Chief of Staff. I had many other important matters to discuss with him and this was one subject that was involved.

Q How much time was spent discussing this matter with the Chief of Staff?

A I cannot say definitely how long we discussed this as it was one of many subjects.

Q Have you no idea whatsoever as to the amount of time you spent discussing it with the Chief of Staff?

A I am unable to say definitely how long.

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Q Prior to the time that you discussed it with the Chief of Staff, had not the American Government made a written complaint through a friendly nation to the Japanese Government about this very matter, setting forth the details in connection with this march and in connection with the deaths of several hundreds of American troops?

A I do not remember well but perhaps a complaint was received.

Q Was that matter discussed at all at any of the bureau meetings that were held weekly or bi-weekly, that you recall?

A I do not remember, but if a complaint was received, it would be discussed at the meeting of bureau chiefs.

Q Had this matter of the "Bataan March" and the deaths of American prisoners as the result thereof been taken up with the Chief of Staff prior to the occasion when you discussed it with him in the Philippines, as you state?

A It was the first time that I took it up with him, but if a complaint was received from the United States, I am sure it must have been sent to the Chief of Staff through the Prisoner of War Information Bureau.

Q Do you know, of your personal knowledge, that this matter was taken up with the Chief of Staff on any other occasion than when you took it up with him during your visit to the Philippines?

A I was acting as Prime Minister and War Minister and I was not able to attend to details of this sort. These are left to the discretion of the chiefs of departments concerned.

Q Do you know, of your personal knowledge, that the matter had ever been taken up with the Chief of Staff other than the time you took it up with him?

A I have no recollection of this having been transmitted.

Q Did the Chief of Staff indicate whether it had been taken up with him before when you discussed it with him?

A No, as I asked him about this.

Q But just what do you mean by that - it had been taken up with him?

A The Chief of Staff said nothing about this matter ever being taken up with him before I mentioned it.

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Q So that, as far as you knew personally or he indicated to you, this is the first time it had been taken up with him by any official of the Japanese Government?

A I am not able to state definitely if this is so or not.

Q Was there anything said by him to indicate to the contrary?

A I am not able to answer this definitely and I cannot speak for the Chief of Staff.

Q Just what did you say to the Chief of Staff in connection with this "Bataan March" and the mistreatment of American prisoners.

A I mentioned that there were rumors of this description and wanted to have his explanation.

Q What explanation did the Chief of Staff give?

A The Chief of Staff explained that due to lack of transport facilities, the prisoners of war had to march long distances in the heat and that there was some suffering, and deaths resulted.

Q Did the Chief of Staff state during this conversation with you what distance the prisoners had been forced to march?

A General WACHI was not there at the time of the march and did not give me any details. He was not responsible for this march.

Q Who was responsible for the march?

A General HOMMA would naturally be responsible.

Q Did you see General HOMMA while you were in the Philippines?

A No. HOMMA had returned to Japan.

Q Had you seen General HOMMA in Japan at any time after the war started and before you went to the Philippines and spoke to the Chief of Staff on this matter?

A No, I did not meet him when he returned to Japan.

P. [unclear]

Q How long prior to the time you discussed this matter with the Chief of Staff in the Philippines was it that HOMMA had returned to Japan?

A I do not remember when he returned to Japan.

Q Were you aware of the fact that HOMMA was in Japan during the period that he came to Japan and remained here?

A Yes.

Q Did HOMMA report to the War Department here in Tokyo during the time he was in Japan after the beginning of the war with the United States?

A Perhaps he did report at the War Office, but I did not meet him.

Q Did you or anyone else discuss with HOMMA while he was here or at any other time, the rumors of the deaths of the American soldiers in the "Bataan March"?

A I did not know of these rumors at the time he returned to Japan and I do not know of anyone else having discussed these matters with him. When he returned to Japan, it was merely said that he had returned after a very successful campaign.

Q Did you or any official of the Japanese Government ever discuss with General HOMMA the matter of the deaths of the American soldiers resulting from the "Bataan March"?

A I do not know if this matter was ever discussed.

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- Q Were these complaints, which were made during this period by the United States and Great Britain through friendly nations with respect to the mistreatment of their prisoners by the Japanese Government, taken up at the weekly meetings of the Prisoner Bureau that you have referred to?
- A Yes. These matters were taken up at the bi-weekly meetings.

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